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Review: Changing Patterns in Christian Education

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BOOK REVIEWS

Changing Patterns in Christian Education, Marshall C. Dendy. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965, pp. 96. Reviewed by Elmer Towns, Visiting Prof. in Christian Education, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, President Winnipeg Bible College, Winnipeg, Canada.

Changing Patterns in Christian Education was the subject of the alumni lectures delivered to the faculty and student body of the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, November, 1963. Marshall C. Dendy is executive secretary of the Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U.S. These lectures presented the historical setting of the Presbyterian church emphasizing John Calvin and John Knox, and their contributions to the field of Christian Education. Dendy's thesis indicates that the principles, upon which the new Covenant Life curriculum is being developed in the middle of the twentieth century, had their roots in the works of these men who lived four hundred years ago.

In the chapter, "History is Prologue," the author shows the general development of religious education in the United States to its present state. The needs of our contemporary culture and the failings of the church are sited as evidence for the development of new and better means to carry out the commands of the great commission.

Dendy has done an excellent job of going to original sources in giving a comprehensive survey of the life of John Calvin. He sites, "Calvin is regarded by many as the greatest theologian since Augustine" (p. 17). The author indicates that Calvin was engaged in a ministry of Christian education that was not after the pattern of our twentieth century. Dendy attempts a definition of Calvin's concept of Christian education, "Christian education as understood by Calvin is the use of a body of truth concerning the Christian faith, essentially the revealed Word of God, by the believing community, a reliance upon the work of the Holy Spirit, so that men may be confronted by God, believe in Christ, be informed concerning the great beliefs of the Christian church, and be rightly related to God and man" (p. 18). Quoting from original sources, the author gives a strong argument for Calvin's belief in the trustworthiness, authority, and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

When the author discusses John Knox, a comprehensive background and history of Knox's life is given. Knox like Calvin and the other reformers put great emphasis upon the Word of God. Dendy also attempts to define Knox's concept of Christian education, "It is the church engaged in teaching the faith entrusted to it through proclamation, worship, and instruction, nurture in the home, ministry in society, and involvement in the life of the nation. It is teaching the whole gospel to the whole of man in the whole of society" (p. 55).

By the way Dendy has used original sources, a conservative would read into the text that Calvin and Knox held to the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. However, Dendy does not hold such a view. Dendy reads into the text, "Belief in the authority of the Scriptures has been

equated with belief in the inerrancy of the scriptures. Such views are inconsistent with the view on the authority of the scriptures held by Calvin and Knox" (p. 59).

In the chapter, "The Road We Have Travelled," the author examines the development of the Presbyterian church in the United States. He examines the lack of social Gospel emphasis in the Presbyterian church, attributing it to theological emphases. Dendy traces the development from a theological emphasis to the restatement of the aims of the church as made by the Board of Christian Education in 1955. This restatement indicated a fresh approach to the church's understanding of its task in Christian nurture and resulted in the development of the Covenant Life curriculum.

In the final chapter, Dendy reviews the Covenant Life curriculum and what it will do for the church. It is not the reviewer's task to evaluate the curriculum, inasmuch as, only Dendy's evaluation of the curriculum occurs in the book. As we would expect, Dendy is the arch-defender and promoter of the new Covenant Life curriculum. In view of the high claims made for the curriculum and what it will do for the total student and the total church as it affects the total society, this reviewer wonders if any curriculum can be so effective.

Herklots, H. G. G.; Whyte, James; and Sharp, Robin, *Preparing for the Ministry of the 1970's*. Allenson, Naperville, Ill., 1964. Reviewed by Earl D. Radmacher, President, Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary.

Training for the ministry is undergoing revolutionary changes in our days, and those who are responsible for, and influenced by, the development of the theological seminary's curriculum should be vitally interested and, perhaps, troubled by certain trends and encouraged by others. This book represents the combined efforts of three British clergymen who speak on behalf of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Free Churches. The main part has been written by Canon Hugh Herklots of Peterborough Cathedral, who is Moderator of the Church of England's 27 teacher-training colleges.

One most encouraging note is the renewal of the first century emphasis on lay participation in the work of the church. The effectiveness of the church has been stifled in many areas by a "minister-centered church" which produces the "ordinary Christian," for it does not encourage the church members to stir up the gifts that are in them, or to rise to their full maturity in Christ. There is a growing conviction that ministers must enable members to realize that they *are* the church. As Archbishop Temple once wrote: "There can be no widespread evangelization of England unless the work is undertaken by the lay people of the church. . . . The main duty of the clergy must be to train the lay members of the congregation in their work of witness." The laity are the church's front-line troops and the ministry is there to support, supply, and train them.

With this healthy trend in mind, James Whyte of the Church of Scotland strikes a rather disconcerting note, however, when he states that "this view brings into prominence once more the traditional functions of the ministry rather than the gimmicks and techniques on which much



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